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New York

President: Mr. Lajčák ..... (Slovakia)

The meeting was called to order at 9 a.m.

Address by His Excellency Mr. Aleksandar Vučić, President of the Republic of Serbia

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Serbia.

Mr. Aleksandar Vučić, President of the Republic of Serbia, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Aleksandar Vučić, President of the Republic of Serbia, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Vučić: I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you, Sir, on assuming your important duties. I would also like to congratulate Mr. Peter Thomson on his successful presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-first session and to avail myself of this opportunity to thank and pay tribute to the new Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres, for his active engagement during the first year of his tenure in such a remarkably responsible post and for initiating a reform process of great importance to the Organization.

It is my great honour to address the Assembly for the first time in this Hall in my capacity as President of the Republic of Serbia. We have carefully followed the addresses made by world leaders over the past two days, and it seems that it would be no exaggeration to say that almost everybody has spoken about the necessity of the reform of the United Nations and about peace and stability, often accusing someone else — an opposing party — of acting to prevent peace and stability or being responsible for a difficult situation in the world. I will do my best to avoid such an approach.

Last year, in this very Hall, it was said that the situation worldwide was difficult. Today it is certainly more difficult than it was a year ago. Today, I take this opportunity to speak before the Assembly, not to attack those who cannot defend themselves or those who would not be able to defend themselves from the truth. I will speak about Serbia, its people, its re-entering of the world, and the fact that the world is once again accepting and embracing Serbia and Serbia is trying to understand the world, even if sometimes it might not agree with the great Powers. Unlike some leaders, I have no need to patronize my people or to run an election or non-election campaign from this rostrum, because we have already won all our internal political battles. That is why I will speak about Serbia today and Serbia in the future, as well as the future of the entire Western Balkans region, where I come from.

It important to speak about the entire Balkans, especially its Western part, because without broader and more serious insight into the problem we are facing, we will not be able to see, let alone resolve, our individual problems. I would like to share a quote from our famous writer, Isidora Sekulić, who said the following:

> "A peninsula is a separate world. Countries and nations within it, as if embarked on one boat must have one common political problem and a

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political ideal, no matter how different they might usually be. The Balkans comes first, before all the countries in the Balkans, whenever the moment is difficult and dangerous, regardless of whether it is dangerous politically or in terms of culture. Will the Balkans for once open its sleepy eyes and see its paramount cultural capacity, if it plunges as a whole?"

Condition number one for a prosperous future for all of us in that region is how to preserve peace and tranquillity. The Republic of Serbia invests a great deal of effort in stabilizing the situation in the region, which is our permanent commitment and policy. As we have done so far, we will continue to work devotedly and committedly to promote regional stability and cooperation, because we believe that it is an investment in a better tomorrow for all of us. In order to achieve success today and progress in the future, it is necessary, no matter how pathetic that might seem, to preserve peace and stability at all costs. This is a priority sociopolitical task that requires daily hard work and learning. That in turn will help economic growth and reforms, which are a prerequisite for a better life, not only for the poor but also for the middle classes.

In previous years, we in Serbia demonstrated that with responsible politics of fiscal consolidation, even without huge privatization incomes, we could create a budget surplus. We lowered the unemployment rate from 26 per cent to 12 per cent and created a flexible labour market by introducing modern laws, even though doing that has proved difficult for some far stronger countries in the developed West. Above all else, I am proud that we have begun to invest in the creativity of our young people and that digitalization and artificial intelligence are becoming important topics in Serbia, not just in the most developed countries of the world.

Of course, there are still many things that we must deliver. When a person comes from the Western Balkans the first question is whether we will be part of some new conflict or whether we will opt for a better and more carefree future. In spite of its numerous challenges, Serbia will continue investing in efforts to create conditions for better relations within the region that are based on mutual respect and commitment to a common European future.

Today I would particularly like to mention the political issues in the region and Belgrade's relations with Pristina. Bearing in mind the paramount importance of this issue for the Republic of Serbia, I underline once again that reaching a political solution to the issue of Kosovo and Metohija is a national priority for Serbia. It is an issue that has a huge effect not only on our economy but also on a clear future for young people both in Serbia and in the entire region.

We all know that we do not recognize the unilateral declaration of independence of so-called Kosovo, but I will not speak about disrespect for our territorial integrity and sovereignty. Instead, I will speak about our efforts to resolve the problem and to try to find a solution to a centuries-long problem that the great Powers were not helpful with back in 1999 and 2008. I will speak about our efforts to talk about the future with Albanian leaders from Pristina.

Yesterday we all listened to Michael Bloomberg saying that it is better to spend thousands of hours talking than one minute fighting. Everything that has been achieved so far through the Brussels dialogue has been the result of difficult compromises and unambiguous concessions on both sides, albeit mostly on ours. The significant progress reached throughout this process confirms the constructiveness and commitment of the Republic of Serbia to this dialogue.

We have also demonstrated our readiness to make compromises that were not easy, thereby helping to find mutually acceptable solutions to many complex issues. I want to emphasize that in the past four years, after we started the dialogue process in Brussels, although there have been some fights, quarrels and physical attacks against the Serbs in the territory of Kosovo and Metohija, nobody has been killed in ethnic confrontations. For Serbs and for Albanians, this is a great step forward, and I am therefore eager to continue with such political efforts in the future.

Nevertheless, upon entering this Hall, we received information that Pristina's authorities had announced that they had secured the majority needed for Kosovo to gain membership status in UNESCO. I urge the Assembly not to allow this, and remind members that it was these very people who took part in the devastation of Serbian monasteries, churches and cultural and spiritual heritage sites in Kosovo and Metohija.

Additionally, we have made great efforts to stabilize the overall situation in the Balkans. We have often stayed silent in the face of insults and attacks from various other countries because we know that peace and reconciliation are more important than

scoring easy political points. Precisely because of that, Serbs are more than eager to continue with successful economic reforms, as well as with the idea for creating a regional economic zone, which we do not intend to give up on.

The former Yugoslavia was widely respected as a market and for its success in attracting investors and international attention. Today, we are too small to succeed as individual markets. I therefore firmly believe that a unique customs zone and taxation system are the future of the region. An example of the problems we have is that a farmer producing milk only 10 kilometres from the border loses at least 7 to 8 per cent of his profit by waiting 48 hours to cross into another country. I also believe that a better, improved economy is the second biggest task for all our nations and for Serbia as well.

The third issue — no less important than the first and second — is uniting the big tasks of economic progress with our aspirations to European Union (EU) membership. The path to membership in the EU, our most important trade and investment partner, is seen as leading to greater stability, economic progress and the consolidation of democracy. In previous years, the EU enlargement policy for Western Balkan countries has been one of the most powerful instruments in the political and economic transformation of the countries of the region into stable and modern societies.

We believe that this policy, regardless of all the difficulties existing within the EU itself as well as in the candidate countries and potential candidates, must continue, and on an equally strong basis. We all want to be a part of the EU, but sometimes people in the Balkans and people in Serbia are treated unfairly, in contrast to those who took that route earlier. We are asking the EU not to speed up our accession process but to treat us fairly and, at least to some extent, in the same manner that it treated some of the full-fledged Member States admitted after 2003.

As all are aware, Serbs are a very dignified people, and we expect all other countries of the world to respect us as we respect them and their territorial integrity and sovereignty. We have never wanted nor will we ever want something that belongs to somebody else. We ask only for equal respect for our country and its people. I am proud that Serbia protects its freedom, independence and sovereignty and is a country that observes democratic principles. We will continue along that path and never give up the politics of military neutrality, because we believe that it is the politics of peace and the future.

While we strive towards joining the EU and establishing partnerships with Western countries, including by improving our relations with the United States, we continue to cherish the best possible relations with the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China. Not only are we not ashamed of those good relations, we are very proud of them. But we will always be ready to observe developments in today's world by not judging superficially what is right or wrong, just or unjust. We have never threatened anybody, nor will we, but we will always dare to condemn actions such as launching a missile that forces the inhabitants of the Japanese island of Hokkaido to spend a day or a night in shelters.

I would like to remind members that the courageous and wise American President Dwight D. Eisenhower was prudent enough to say that

> "every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed".

Likewise, we will always show care for and solidarity with Syrian, Afghan, sub-Saharan or any other refugees, without diminishing our resolve to confront international terrorism and radical Islamic movements such as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham or Al-Qaida, because we believe that a democratic society based on equal rights for all is the only society that we want to live and see our future in.

We recognize that fighting poverty and social inequality in the context of preventing radicalism and strengthening extremism is a very important task. We champion the integration of citizens of all religions and political and other affiliations into modern society on a basis of common values, while preserving each person's individual identity and respect for all.

Serbia believes in and is pleased with the increasingly important role of the United Nations, not only in maintaining peace and stability, but in the more important tasks the Organization performs for the benefit of humankind today. Serbia will support any United Nations reform that strengthens the role of the Organization, because it means more discussion, less use of force and less arrogance in international relations.

Our job is therefore to do everything we can to enable a more active role for the United Nations worldwide.

I will conclude with words that are often attributed to the great Albert Einstein:

> "The world is a dangerous place to live. Not because of the people who are evil, but because of the people who do not do anything about it."

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Serbia for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Aleksandar Vučić, President of the Republic of Serbia, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Jovenel Moïse, President of the Republic of Haiti

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Haiti.

Mr. Jovenel Moïse, President of the Republic of Haiti, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Jovenel Moïse, President of the Republic of Haiti, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Moïse (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to convey our sincere congratulations to you, Mr. President, on your election to preside over this session of the General Assembly.

Today, all eyes rightly turn to the United Nations, whose mission has never been so essential. That is why we must pursue the reform process started years ago, in order to better adapt our Organization to modern reality so that it can effectivelyattain the goals enshrined in the founding Charter of the United Nations. In that connection, I welcome the vision and leadership of Secretary-General António Guterres. I hope that under his able leadership, the Organization can honour the commitments and initiatives aimed at improving living conditions for everyone on our planet and enabling the United Nations to confront global threats and prevent and resolve conflicts.

The Republic of Haiti fully supports any initiative that reduces international tensions, defuses crises and achieves peaceful settlements to disputes. We believe that the United Nations must act in the context of conflict prevention. The Republic of Haiti has always spoken out against the proliferation of nuclear weapons and firmly condemns any tension generated by the desire to possess and produce nuclear weapons.

In the Middle East, the Syrian crisis continues to shock our universal conscience. In this very Hall, numerous resolutions have been voted on calling for an end to that inhumane tragedy, which has left countless dead. The prevailing status quo in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, punctuated by intermittent violence, will obviously not produce a solution.

The Republic of Haiti calls for an honourable exit from the present situation that can benefit our brother people of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, and urges all the parties involved to engage in dialogue and negotiation.

The successful negotiated outcome of the conflict in Colombia shows that it is not armed confrontation and blind violence that resolve disputes. May the victory in Colombia serve as an example to us all.

The Republic of Haiti, true to its ideals of peace, dialogue and friendliness among peoples, would very much like to see a window of opportunity offered to the Republic of China on Taiwan, so that it can participate in the major decisions that we, the Member States, have adopted to improve the human condition on planet Earth.

As I address the Assembly for the first time, I recognize our immense responsibility for addressing the environmental challenges and threats confronting the planet. The Republic of Haiti is committed to the environmental dimension of sustainable development. As an island State, Haiti is determined to strengthen its resilience in the face of the natural disasters that affect the Caribbean region every year. The Haitian people are making tremendous efforts to recover from the damage caused by Hurricanes Matthew and Irma.

Similarly, the unprecedented scale of destruction by consecutive hurricanes inflicted on our sister Caribbean countries, including Antigua and Barbuda and Dominica, as well as parts of Texas and Florida in the United States of America, shows the adverse effects of global warming on our planet. In that regard, the Republic of Haiti would like to express its solidarity with the victims in general and the people of the Caribbean in particular. We also stand with the victims

of natural disasters and the people and the Government of Mexico.

In that regard, my country attaches particular importance to the fulfilment of commitments under the Paris Climate Agreement, especially since the prospects for sustainable development are shrinking in the wake of environmental crises and climate degradation. We therefore hope that major greenhouse-gas-emitting countries will contribute the necessary resources for the effective implementation of the Paris Agreement. We firmly believe that we must honour the pledge to equip the most vulnerable countries with the means to help them make the energy transition to renewable energies and bolster their resilience to the adverse effects of climate change.

In the Caribbean, and in Haiti in particular, the latest events have reminded us of the extent to which climate change affects our countries. And at the same moment, the spectacular power of Hurricane Maria threatens us again. But the fact is that what happens to us is not fated, but is rather a result of human beings' actions on their environment, which we have a shared responsibility to repair. The victim countries, including the Republic of Haiti, do not have the spare resources to respond adequately to the tragic consequences of climate change.

I call for an increase in insurance coverage for hurricanes and other natural disasters. The small Caribbean countries, with severely limited economic resources, need an insurance system that is proportionate to the threat. To that end, in January 2018, when Haiti assumes the presidency of the Caribbean Community, we intend to organize a regional conference to set up an inter-State commission to agree on an appropriate strategy. It will be a logical follow up to Haiti's call at the fifth summit of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction, held in Cancún, Mexico, in May, for the creation of a regional fund to finance programmes to mitigate the effects of natural disasters in the region. The fund would be financed based on a percentage of the gross domestic product of the affected countries and by developed countries that emit greenhouse gases. Haiti would like to take this opportunity to appeal to States Members of the United Nations that are affected by climate change to take this approach as well.

This year unquestionably marks a break with the instability that has been such an obstacle to the development of the Republic of Haiti. Since my accession to the presidency on 7 February, my Administration has worked to consolidate democracy and the rule of law by making efforts to create conditions conducive to socioeconomic development and political and social stability.

First, the Haitian Government has been uncompromising in tackling corruption — overbilling for public contracts, misuse of State property and cheques made out to fictitious employees, all facilitated by corrupt individuals who, through such despicable crimes, steal the fruits of education from the children of the Haitian people. Corruption, in all of its forms, plagues and atrophies the economy. It has deeply weakened our political foundation and destabilized the country's social fabric.

Corruption is a crime against development. The millions of dollars spent Haiti in recent decades were sometimes channeled into contracts that destabilized the national economy to our people's detriment. It is therefore high time that official development assistance and our domestic resources served the interests of the entire Haitian nation. Corruption deprives the Haitian Government of the resources it needs to provide basic services to the population. If it is not stopped but rather continues to spread, it will fuel political and social instability. It deprives the vast majority of Haitians of adequately distributed electricity, a quality education for their children, clean drinking water and social and economic opportunities. With the aim of reversing this devastating trend, the new Haitian leadership is waging a determined struggle against corruption.

As regards the public administration, the Government is working on five priorities based on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. We are working with Parliament to strengthen our republican institutions in order to provide citizens with better access to public services. This policy has been given tangible form through the Caravan of Change, a strategy aimed at providing electricity 24 hours a day through clean energy. We are looking to manage groundwater, irrigate agricultural land and tend to our rivers, which, if not cared for, pose an environmental threat. We are also striving to overcome our housing deficit and to provide 12,000 more classrooms throughout the country.

With regard to the rule of law, measures currently under way aim to guarantee the independence and increase the effectiveness of our judicial apparatus. We are strengthening our fight against corruption,

contraband and impunity. We are reinforcing public security by continuously improving and building the capacities of the Haitian National Police. At the same time, we are remobilizing Haiti's armed forces, which are working in accordance with a new development framework and strictly in line with the Constitution.

The international community has been supporting national and public security in Haiti for 13 years, and with every national disaster, friendly countries have had to come to the aid of the Haiti people, showing why we need a strong defence force and why Haiti, following the departure of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), will gradually establish a military force to accomplish three key mandates.

We will first create an engineering unit able to contribute to major public-works projects and intervene promptly following natural disasters. Secondly, we will launch an aviation unit for training young people in aeronautical mechanics and pilots able to fly helicopters in the wake of natural disasters; and thirdly, we will have a medical unit able to care for the victims of natural disasters and residents of the most remote areas of our country.

On the economic front, despite our lack of national resources, the Government is mobilizing all levers at its disposal to get the economy back on a path to growth. This year, through a legislative agenda based on the joint efforts of the political parties, we have enacted eight of nine laws geared to improving the business climate. Similarly, through its dynamic policies, my Administration is taking necessary if politically controversial measures to get Haiti's economy back on a path to growth and to create decent jobs, particularly for young people concerned about their futures. In that regard, our human resources management office is working in a framework of State reform, through public examinations, to recruit 12,000 young civil servants in order to give new impetus to the growth and development of public administration, and will be replacing civil servants who are on the brink of retirement.

We are determined to provide other alternatives and opportunities, particularly to the most vulnerable sectors of our society, to ensure that they are not tempted to leave the country, sometimes putting their lives in danger, in search of better living conditions. Haiti cannot continue to see its young people flee in search of opportunities, driven by the corruption and the destruction of national institutions that have significantly widened the gap between citizens and the State.

We wish to thank all friendly countries of the region who have taken in Haitian migrants and will therefore contribute actively to international efforts in 2018 to adopt a global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration.

The Haitian Government has undertaken efforts to give its agricultural sector new momentum through the Caravan of Change. All of the country's departments will benefit from the public authorities' efforts to develop their potential for social and economic development. In one area of Artibonite, and in the South, in Grand'Anse and Les Nippes, we have already launched a strategy whereby the once moribund State will relaunch long-neglected but essential work. We intend to do our all to halt the accelerated degradation of the environment and make Haiti more resilient to climate change, improve basic essential public infrastructure, increase the provision of basic services, and stimulate the private sector and foreign direct investment.

What is really at stake here, and what is crucial, is creating an enabling environment for strong, sustained and inclusive growth that will create jobs. Our long-term goal is to make Haiti a magnet for investment. The Haitian people are acutely aware that they are primarily responsible for taking ownership of and organizing the country in a sovereign fashion. All our endeavours at the economic level are focused on making rational use of our scant resources and doing everything we can with them.

While we are deeply grateful to the United Nations for its commitment to Haiti, I would be remiss if I did not recall two lamentable situations that have arisen from its presence in our country. On the one hand, we have seen odious acts of sexual exploitation and violence committed by certain peacekeepers or other members of United Nations staff; and on the other, we have witnessed the introduction of a cholera epidemic into Haiti. The harmful consequences of these demonstrations of international solidarity imply, as the United Nations has already recognized, a moral obligation to enact measures to provide the resources necessary to eliminate cholera in Haiti.

Improving the health-care system, including by eradicating cholera, is a priority of the Haitian Government. Despite the recent progress, the number of victims stands at approximately 10,000 and, regrettably,

continues to grow. There are tens of thousands of cholera orphans. The time has therefore come for the United Nations to truly live up to its noble ideals, based fundamentally on respect for human rights, by assuming its full responsibility for remedying a situation that has done serious harm to the Haitian people. It is high time that the United Nations honoured the commitments it has made under the new approach to fighting the cholera epidemic recommended by the Secretary-General and approved by the General Assembly. We therefore align ourselves with the urgent appeal launched by Secretary-General António Guterres to establish a trust fund to fully implement the two components of this new approach.

We also welcome the decision taken by the General Assembly to reallocate $40.5 million from the MINUSTAH budget for 2015-2016 to the fight against the epidemic. We would like to see other international partners follow that example. We want to ensure that the sick receive adequate care, that the victims and their children get due compensation, and that drinking water and sanitation systems in Haiti are developed under the auspices of the National Directorate for Drinking Water and Sanitation.

The Republic of Haiti is resolutely committed to making progress and strengthening the rule of law. Of course, these objectives remain works in progress. The new leadership of Haiti will spare no effort to foster the great transformations necessary to bring the State out of its traumatic and painful lethargy. The Haitian Government is working tirelessly to ensure the safety and well-being of its people. These are vital prerequisites for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

Political stability is the most important of all public goods, as I said in my election campaign. In that regard, I intend to continue the dialogue I began last week on building robust institutions in the political sphere, a dialogue in which almost all the political parties in Parliament and all local authorities took part. Moreover, in the coming weeks, my Administration will begin a national consultation in all sectors with a view to achieving the stability required to undertake a programme of economic and social development over the next 25 years at least.

Economic, political and social stakeholders in Haiti are aware of the overriding obligation they have to promote social peace in order to fulfil the destiny that has been reserved for our noble and great nation, a cradle of liberty, equality and fraternity, the Republic of Haiti.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Haiti for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Jovenel Moïse, President of the Republic of Haiti, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Moon Jae-in, President of the Republic of Korea

The President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Korea.

Mr. Moon Jae-in, President of the Republic of Korea, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Moon Jae-in, President of the Republic of Korea, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Moon (*spoke in Korean; interpretation provided by the delegation*): First of all, on behalf of the people and the Government of the Republic of Korea, I would like to take this opportunity to convey my deepest sympathy to the victims of the earthquake that hit Mexico on 19 September as well as to the people and the Government of Mexico.

I would like to express my respect and gratitude to all Member States and the staff of the Secretariat for their contributions to world peace and security.

I congratulate Mr. Miroslav Lajčák on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. I expectt this session will yield many meaningful results under his excellent leadership.

I also wish Secretary-General António Guterres great success. The Republic of Korea is a strong supporter of the goals of the United Nations aimed at preventing conflicts and sustaining peace. I look forward to its rebirth as an even stronger organization for fostering peace and prosperity for all peoples during his tenure as Secretary-General.

As I prepared this address, I thought about the spirit of the United Nations and the joint mission we all share. The United Nations is perhaps one of the best institutional inventions created by human intelligence. It was born to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war and has worked tirelessly to meet

the challenges confronting humankind over the past 70 years. The role and contribution to the international community of the United Nations will continue to grow over time. Today the number of transnational issues continues to increase, and no country can resolve them single-handedly. For this reason, we should truly fulfil the spirit of the United Nations in finding solutions to all the problems facing us.

To that end, I hope the world will look to the Republic of Korea, located on the southern part of the Korean peninsula at the eastern end of the Eurasian continent. I believe the candlelight rallies last winter in my country represented a historic moment that reflectedthe brilliant achievement of the spirit of the United Nations. Embodying the power of cooperation and solidarity in defiance of challenges, the rallies lit the way ahead towards a future for humankind. Some may remember the scenes of the candlelight rallies shown by the media. On streets sparkling with millions of lights, people expressed their opinions freely and joined in discussions on every street corner. There was singing, dancing and painting, the radiant faces of parents taking their children by the hand to join the rallies, and the pride of young people who picked up trash on the streets afterwards. All those scenes were very much a part of our democracy and peace.

The candlelight revolution in Korea started in a public square where a yearning for the restoration of democracy and the Constitution awakened citizens' collective intelligence. I myself participated in the rallies as an ordinary citizen. The people of the Republic of Korea achieved democracy in the most peaceful and beautiful manner. They proved the power of popular sovereignty, which is the quintessence of democracy. They also proved that the power of peace can bring greater changes to the world than violence can.

The new Administration of the Republic of Korea was made possible by that candlelight revolution. Beyond its significance in making way for democratic elections, the Administration was established through the people's participation and aspirations in the awareness that they are the rightful owners of the nation. I stand here now on behalf of that Administration. I am very thankful for, as well as proud, of the fact that the Republic of Korea, while it is a democracy that bloomed only recently, has shown the world new hope for that form of Government. Currently building on its new-found strength, the Republic of Korea intends to play an active role in addressing the issues facing the international community.

The Republic of Korea has always walked in step with the United Nations. Since our Government was established, in 1948, we have received significant assistance from the United Nations, both during the Korean War and in the process of post-war reconstruction. Although we were not able to become a Member of the United Nations until 1991, we have enhanced our role and responsibilities as a State Member faster than any other in the span of only a single generation. Since 1993, Korea continues to participate in peacekeeping operations. As Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission this year, it is focusing on resolving the root causes of conflicts.

In the past five years, the Republic of Korea has increased its financial assistance for refugees 15-fold, and last year, it joined the $20-million-plus club under the aegis of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. By expediting the implementation of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and making changes in its own energy policy, the Korean Government is also taking a lead role in supporting the climate-change responses of developing countries through the Global Green Growth Institute and the Green Climate Fund. Moreover, my Administration has reached the goal of filling 30 per cent of its Cabinet positions with female ministers, thereby spearheading efforts to realize gender equality, one of the Goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

In the next few years, the Republic of Korea will significantly increase its contributions to the United Nations in every sector. It is truly meaningful that the theme of this session of the General Assembly — "Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet" — is in line with the philosophy of governance of the new Administration in the Republic of Korea. "People come first" is the slogan that I have used for several years to express my political philosophy, and the people are at the centre of every policy of my new Administration. As of now, my Administration is pursuing bold measures to change the economic paradigm so as to deal with inequalities that stand in the way of growth and social cohesion. We are currently pursuing economic policies focused on income growth for individuals and households, and promoting an economy in which growth is fuelled by job creation and everyone can enjoy equal opportunities and the products of growth.

That is what we call a people-centred economy. My Administration's determined endeavours to realize inclusive growth will not be confined to our country. In accordance with that new paradigm, the Republic of Korea will offer its support for sustainable growth in developing countries.

I was born in a refugee town in the middle of the Korean War. That civil war, which evolved into an international war, devastated countless lives. More than 3 million people died, and many of the survivors were deprived of a decent living. My father was one of them. My father, who believed that he was taking temporary refuge at that time, was never able to return to his hometown before he passed away. I come from one of the separated families — victims whose human rights were violated because of the war. The war has yet to come to a complete end.

The Korean War, which began as an offshoot of the larger Cold War, continues to this day. Although the Cold War ended and it has been 64 years since the conclusion of the Korean armistice agreement, the war continues in the form of an uneasy ceasefire on the peninsula — the last remnant of the Cold War order in North-East Asia. As tensions mount in North-East Asia because of the North Korean nuclear and missile issue, the memory of war and its wounds are becoming more acute, and hearts that long for peace are filled with pain. That describes the situation concerning the Republic of Korea on the Korean peninsula in September 2017.

For me, the President of the only divided country in the world, achieving peace is a calling and a historic duty. I represent my fellow citizens, who have sent a message of peace through their candlelight revolution to the global village in which wars and conflicts know no end. At the same time, I have been entrusted with the responsibility of safeguarding my people's right to peace and to undisturbed daily life as universal values. For those reasons, I hope that North Korea will be able to choose its own path leading to peace. I believe that peace, when it is chosen willingly, naturally becomes sound and sustainable. More than anything, I am grateful that my convictions are shared by the international community.

Despite the international community's concerted demands and warnings, and to our great disappointment and indignation, North Korea recently carried out its sixth nuclear test and additional missile-related provocations. In the wake of the nuclear test, the Korean Government has consequently convinced countries in and beyond the region of the need for stronger sanctions and pressure to make North Korea end them and choose the path of dialogue. I very much appreciate the Security Council's unanimous and unprecedentedly rapid adoption of resolution 2375 (2017), on North Korea sanctions, with measures tougher than in any previous resolution. That clearly reflects the fact that the international community is collectively outraged and is responding with one voice to address the North Korean nuclear issue and the problems on the Korean peninsula. Once again, as the representative of one of the parties directly involved with issues concerning the Korean peninsula, I would like to express my appreciation to the international community for its shared understanding and support for the position of the Korean Government.

Despite North Korea's flagrant violation of its obligations and commitments under the Charter of the United Nations, the Korean Government and the international community are determined to make every possible effort to resolve the North Korean nuclear issue peacefully. The relevant Security Council sanctions on North Korea, in resolutions that articulate the principles of a peaceful, diplomatic and political settlement of the North Korean nuclear issue, are also part of those efforts.

Once again, here in the General Assembly, where nations pledge to act to achieve world peace and the shared prosperity of all peoples, I will make the following points very clear to North Korea and the international community. We do not desire the collapse of North Korea. We will not seek reunification by absorption or artificial means. If North Korea makes the decision, even at this juncture, to stand on the right side of history, we are ready, alongside the international community, to assist. North Korea should acknowledge all these immutable facts as soon as possible. It must immediately cease making reckless decisions that could lead to its own isolation and downfall, and choose the path of dialogue. I urge North Korea to abandon its hostile policies against other countries and to give up its nuclear weapons programme in a verifiable and irreversible way.

The efforts of the international community should also be strengthened. It must continue to respond strongly and sternly until North Korea gives up its nuclear programme of its own accord. All nations must thoroughly implement Security Council sanctions

resolutions and seek new measures in the event of any further provocations by the North. It is also important to manage the situation calmly. All of our endeavours are aimed at preventing the outbreak of war and maintaining peace. In that respect, the situation surrounding the North Korean nuclear issue must be managed calmly so that tensions are not ratcheted up too far and accidental military clashes do not destroy the peace. We should all remind ourselves of the words of former United States President Ronald Reagan: "Peace is not the absence of conflict, but the ability to cope with conflict by peaceful means".

I would like to make a special request to the States Members of the United Nations and in particular to the Security Council. In order to fundamentally resolve the North Korean nuclear issue, the basic spirit of a secure community enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations should be fulfilled on the Korean peninsula and in North-East Asia. The pillars of security in North-East Asia and multilateralism should be wisely combined.

The spirit of the United Nations is realizing global peace through multilateral dialogue. The Korean peninsula is where that spirit is most desperately needed. The realization of peace is what the United Nations was created for, what it aims for and what it is in the process of achieving. We need the United Nations to play a more active role on the Korean peninsula. The most important role the United Nations is being asked to play today is to come up with fundamental measures to end the vicious cycle of increased provocations and heightened sanctions.

I have explained our new economic map for the Korean peninsula and new vision for the northern economy many times. I believe that genuine peace and prosperity in North-East Asia will begin when the foundation for a North-East Asian economic community is solidified on one side and multilateral security cooperation comes into being on the other.

When the Olympic Games were reintroduced, in 1896, they had not been held for 1,500 years. The impetus behind their revival was the thirst for peace. The history of the modern Olympics started with the overwhelming emotion of the first Olympics, held in Athens on the Balkan peninsula, once a centre of conflict. Five months from now, the XXIII Olympic Winter Games will be held in PyeongChang, in the Republic of Korea, the first of a series to be held in North-East Asia — PyeongChang in 2018, Tokyo in 2020 and Beijing in 2022. I hope that these three Olympics will offer an opportunity for promoting peace and economic cooperation in North-East Asia, where the remnants of the Cold War and hope for the future, as well as confrontations and cooperation, coexist. The Republic of Korea is ready to make every possible effort to that end.

Mr. Hilale (Morocco), Vice-President, took the Chair.

I would ask members of the Assembly to imagine, for one moment, people who love peace and sports gathering from all around the world in PyeongChang, which is only 100 kilometres from the demilitarized zone, the symbol of division and confrontation on the Korean peninsula. Heads of State and Government from all corners of the world will exchange greetings of friendship and harmony. My heart fills with joy when I imagine North Korean athletes marching into the stadium during the opening ceremony, a South and North Korean joint cheering squad enthusiastically welcoming them alongside the brightly smiling faces of people from all over the world. It is not an impossible dream.

I will work wholeheartedly to turn that into a reality, in cooperation with the International Olympic Committee, up until the last minute, in order to welcome North Koreans to the PyeongChang Winter Olympics. I hope that PyeongChang will become another candle to be lit. Like the candles the Korean people held out in the face of the crisis of democracy, I believe that PyeongChang will become a candle that sheds light on peace when peace is threatened. I hope that all Member States and the United Nations will light their candles. I hope they will put their hearts and minds together to go hand in hand with peace.

Today, with that heartfelt pledge, I invite all Heads of State and Government from around the world to come to PyeongChang. The steps they take, together, will become a march for peace. I look forward to seeing them all in PyeongChang next year.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Korea for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Moon Jae-in, President of the Republic of Korea, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by General Michel Aoun, President of the Lebanese Republic

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Lebanese Republic.

General Michel Aoun, President of the Lebanese Republic, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I have great pleasure in welcoming His Excellency General Michel Aoun, President of the Lebanese Republic, and inviting him to address the Assembly.

President Aoun (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate Mr. Miroslav Lajčák on his election to the presidency of the General Assembly at its current session. I wish him every success in his endeavours. I also thank His Excellency Mr. Peter Thomson for wisely guiding the work of the previous session, and I commend Secretary-General Guterres for his efforts in revitalizing the role of the United Nations.

Today we are in New York in September. We should think back 16 years ago and remember when terrorism struck this city, claiming the lives of thousands of victims. From this very rostrum, we renew our solidarity with the families of those victims and the families of all victims of terrorism all over the world.

That tragic event ignited an international war against terrorism. That war has spread and has lost its purpose. Its raging fire has spread to other countries, especially in the Middle East. Many countries have felt that raging fire — some directly, while others have borne the burden of the results. It has fed the most heinous forms of terrorism, terrorism that seeks to eliminate humankind, civilization and culture. It has perpetrated the most heinous crimes against our people. It has spared no civilians, no children, no women, no old people. It has spared no cultural or religious landmark. It has also mushroomed and struck five continents, its means growing bloodier by the minute. Its crimes have violated all laws, conventions and international norms. No one knows where this terrorism will reach and how and when it will end.

As the war began in Syria, the situation in Lebanon became destabilized. It was clear that, as an Arab country, it was supposed to be drawn into the circle of terrorism. However, Lebanon was able to prevent that horror, by preserving its unity despite its severe political divisions. No one crossed the red line facing every civilian, and that preserved the unity and security of Lebanon, despite the fact that some terrorists managed to infiltrate our towns and cities and organize armed cells there. With all of its forces, Lebanon was gradually able to eliminate those terrorist cells. Recently, our army emerged victorious against the terrorist organizations of Da'esh and Jabhat Fath Al-Sham and their armies, and ended their military presence in Lebanon.

The burden that the ongoing war in Syria has caused Lebanon greatly exceeds our capacities. However, the Lebanese people have proved that they are humane and responsible. They have welcomed refugees into their homes, schools and hospitals. They have shared their food and their labour market with them throughout the years of conflict to this very day, thereby drastically increasing the country's unemployment rate. I would like to point out that more than half of our public schools operate in double shift, morning and afternoon, in order to accommodate and educate Syrian children.

Lebanon is a small, densely populated country with limited resources. Its economy has been affected by several crises — first,the global economic crisis, and then the regional wars that have surrounded our country and prevented it from turning to the East and the Arab States that constitute our vital support. Waves of displaced people and refugees have been unleashed, increasing the country's population by a total of 50 per cent, which means that for every two Lebanese citizens there is one displaced person or refugee. Our population density has increased from 400 to 600 people per square kilometre, resulting in severe overcrowding spread over a total of 10,452 square kilometres. That has adversely affected our economy and led to an increase in the rates of various categories of crime.

More dangerous is the fact that terrorist groups have taken shelter in refugee gathering areas and camps, making them fertile terrain for carrying out terrorist activities and claiming the lives of innocent people. We therefore need to regulate the return of displaced persons to their homeland. That need has become urgent as the situation in most of their original residences has settled.

There are those who talk of voluntary return, while we speak of safe return. There is a difference, and the meetings of the International Syria Support Group have

affirmed that difference. Return is either voluntary or safe, depending on the reasons for displacement. In the case of individual or political asylum due to a threat to the safety and security of the individual, the return should be voluntary. That is the case with political refugees, who should themselves decide the timing of their return, which must be coupled with the acceptance of the host country.

As for the current form of collective asylum in Lebanon, it has arisen for economic and security reasons, as an escape from the dangers of war. We therefore call it displacement rather than asylum. It is not coupled with the acceptance of the host country and is not limited to individual asylum; it is, rather, a form of population invasion. As for the claim that such people will not be safe if they return to their country, we are all aware that it is a pretext and that it is unacceptable.

On the one hand, around 85 per cent of Syrian territory has been recovered by the Government. On the other, if the Syrian Government is reconciling with the armed groups that it is fighting and granting them the freedom to choose between remaining in their villages or moving to other regions, what will the Government do with displaced persons who have fled the war? Recent events in Lebanon have confirmed that issue.

On top of this, the displaced are living in misery in an unhealthy environment, despite all the services provided by the international and Lebanese institutions. It is painful for us to be unable to improve their situation, given their great numbers and our limited capacities. There is no doubt that it would be better if the United Nations assisted them in returning to their homeland rather than helping them to remain in camps that lack basic decent living standards.

In addition to the Syrian exodus and the impending financial collapse of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), Lebanon is burdened by the 500,000 Palestinian refugees who have been displaced from their homeland for 69 years and are still waiting to return to Palestine. We see no serious effort on the part of the United Nations in general, and the Security Council in particular, to implement a two-State solution. On the contrary, the international community, with all of its institutions, is unable to compel Israel to stop building new settlements. The violence continues unabated because people whose identity and land have been stolen cannot be subjugated.

Israel's approach to the solution has always been based on military force and violation of others' rights. Lebanon is a case in point. Israel has repeatedly violated both Lebanese sovereignty and resolution 1701 (2006). Some days ago, the Israeli air force bombed Syrian territory from Lebanese air space. A few days later, it carried out an imaginary raid, breaking the sound barrier above Saïda and causing material damage. Moreover, from time to time Israel installs spying devices in Lebanese territory. Those violations are not new. Israel has been doing such things for seven decades now. Records show that there are at least 100 land, sea and air violations of Lebanese sovereignty each and every month. Lebanon has lodged complaints with the Security Council, but so far has been unable to stop those violations.

These seven decades of war with Israel have shown that cannons, tanks and planes do not achieve solutions or peace. There can be no peace without rights and there can be no justice without respect for rights. It is clear that the crime of expelling Palestinians from their land and displacing them cannot be rectified by committing the additional crime of compelling Lebanon to impose naturalization on Palestinians and denying them the right of return. The weakening of UNRWA's role is a step towards that goal, seeking to end their refugee status in preparation for their resettlement. Lebanon will not allow that to happen. We will refuse to take in those refugees and displaced persons, whatever happens. The choice is ours and ours alone to make.

All these wars have left deep wounds in our society and citizens. They have destroyed civil attitudes and the principles of coexistence, solidarity, tolerance and acceptance among individuals and groups worldwide. Our region has become trapped in a cycle of poverty and is becoming a hotbed of extremism, thereby creating continually deteriorating crises. Any solution must therefore be coupled with economic and social measures that can boost growth, improve social conditions and ensure a decent and stable life for the people of the region.

I therefore call on Members to seriously consider establishing a common market to ensure that we do not live outside the shadow of freedom. Lebanon is itself a model of diversity. Its people, cultures and civilizations have always been diverse. They are the result of an amalgamation born in ancient times — from Aramaic, the language of Jesus Christ, to Arabic, the language of the prophet, in addition to Phoenician, Roman,

Greek, Latin, Persian and Coptic. We must not forget that the Lebanese people have long brought Muslims and Christians of different sects together. Despite a history of war and its repercussions, we have enjoyed peace and its positive aspects. Given our experience in coexistence and our comprehensive culture, Lebanon can be an oasis where the world can meet and engage in dialogue.

After the end of the First World War, the League of Nations was established to maintain world peace. However, it failed and the Second World War broke out only two decades later. At the end of that war, the United Nations was established with the main objective of peacefully resolving disputes among countries and preventing future wars. But has it been successful in achieving that goal? The answer to that question is not difficult. The explosive world around us is the answer.

World War Three has assumed a new form. It is no longer a war among nations, but rather a devastating internal war. Many countries have exploded for religious and ethnic reasons related to extremism and the rejection of others' rights to exist. As for the division of States into sectarian and ethnic groups, it is definitely not the solution and will never prevent wars. On the contrary, that approach can serve only to increase fanaticism, extremism and conflict. The solution will come only through intellectual and cultural change.

Hence the urgent need for an institution dedicated to providing peace education. That has become crucial, since only a new culture of peace and forgiveness that teaches the principles of living together — also known as coexistence, in which people respect freedom of conscience and the right to hold differing opinions — can confront terrorism and create societies capable of establishing peace among people and nations; a culture that brings people together and contributes to strengthening relations among different societies; a culture that assists in adopting the language of dialogue as a means of conflict resolution.

The role and mission of Lebanon is to wage war against the ideology of terrorism. Lebanon, in its pluralistic society, is the antithesis of the unilateralism represented by Da'esh and its peers. That is the basic effort that the United Nations must undertake — to intellectually fight terrorism, which has no geographic borders. It is an intellectual infection, transmitted electronically around the world.

For all of those reasons, I propose Lebanon's candidacy as a permanent centre, independent of the United Nations, for dialogue among different civilizations, religions and races. We hope that Member States will support Lebanon when that proposal is submitted so that we can work together to secure the aspirations of the United Nations as an institution and as nations seeking peace and a decent life for all people in a world of security and stability.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Lebanese Republic for the statement he has just made.

General Michel Aoun, President of the Lebanese Republic, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Nicos Anastasiades, President of the Republic of Cyprus.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Cyprus.

Mr. Nicos Anastasiades, President of the Republic of Cyprus, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Nicos Anastasiades, President of the Republic of Cyprus, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Anastasiades: At the outset, I would like to convey my Government's congratulations to Mr. Miroslav Lajčák on his election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session and assure him of our unwavering support for his mandate.

At the same time, I would like to once again congratulate Secretary-General António Guterres on his assumption of his duties since 1 January. The Government of Cyprus and I personally have full faith and confidence in his abilities and vision. To that end, we stand ready to provide all necessary assistance towards achieving our shared goal of promoting the values and principles of the United Nations at a time marked by great uncertainty and instability.

Like the years preceding it, 2017 has been marked by turbulence. To name only a few examples, terrorism, regional conflicts, forced migration, the alarming

effects of climate change and humanitarian crises are realities that have placed an enormous strain on our peoples and the environment. Human nature drives us to work for what is in our best interests and those of future generations — the preservation of our planet, peaceful settlements of conflicts, an end to terrorism and extremism, action to prevent natural disasters, and joint efforts to alleviate the immeasurable human suffering experienced around the world.

There is only one way to achieve that, and it is multilateralism. We stand here as world leaders to pledge our determination and commitment to a better world, through cooperation and joint actions. It is only through collective efforts that we can address crises like the current one with North Korea, which threatens the resilience of our global non-proliferation and disarmament regimes, as well as the peace and security architecture of the region and beyond.

International multilateral cooperation is also vital in dealing with the scourge of terrorism. Terrorist attacks have unfortunately become commonplace in our world, from Baghdad to Kabul, from Paris to Cairo, from Barcelona to London. They target our cities and citizens with cowardly acts of asymmetric aggression. Along with adopting enhanced security measures, it is essential to prevent and counter radicalization and violent extremism within our societies through education, dialogue, economic growth and social inclusion.

There is no security without development, and there is no development without security. Enhancing our societies' resilience is a key aspect of our multilateral endeavours, and in that respect our determination to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development must remain high on the list of priorities. Sustainable development is at the heart of dealing with the root causes of forced migration, which for the past two years has dominated the global agenda, and not without cause. The crisis is putting pressure on our societies as well as our Governments, while at the same time it is changing the way political dialogue is conducted. However overwhelming the situation may be, we must not lose sight of the big picture, which is the need for solidarity and burden-sharing.

All these issues, along with the additional challenges that we are facing, point in one direction. We need a just, effective and efficient global governance system. In that regard, we are here to renew our commitment to a global order based on international law, with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations at its core — a global order that ensures that peace, security, human rights and sustainable development remain the highest values that we subscribe to, preserve and uphold. Cyprus believes that the reform priorities that the Secretary-General has laid out are essential to ensuring thatmultilateralism remains relevant and effective in a time of growing scepticism and isolationist tendencies.

The three pillars of reform, in distinct yet parallel and complementary processes, will, if successful, provide us with a changed narrative pertaining to the ability to prevent crises before they erupt, reinforcing and enhancing peacekeeping and peacebuilding, humanitarian assistance and long-term development and growth.

The theme of this year's session of the General Assembly — "Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet" — is extremely relevant to my country, which is still suffering from the scourge of war and its ongoing violent division. In that regard, we firmly believe that the most vital element in achieving inter-State, regional and global peace is respecting and ensuring the full and unhindered independence, territorial integrity and sovereignty of each and every State Member of the United Nations — a pillar that constitutes one of the most indispensable provisions of the Charter of the United Nations and the most basic rule aimed at prohibiting foreign intervention in the territory, the exclusive economic zone or the internal affairs of independent and sovereign States Members of the United Nations. It is only by adhering to that standard that we can avoid inter-State conflicts and bloody internal clashes, which in turn establish the conditions for prolonged destabilization, violence and uncertainty.

One country that unfortunately continues to endure the consequences of blatant violations of fundamental principles of the United Nations is mine, the Republic of Cyprus, which since the 1974 military invasion of Turkey has remained under its occupation. The pretext for the invasion was the restoration of constitutional order following the attempted coup d'état against the President of the Republic by the Greek military junta. I have deliberately used the word "pretext" since, instead of restoring the constitutional order, Turkey ended up occupying 37 per cent of the territory of Cyprus, while forcibly displacing more than a third of the Greek Cypriot community from their ancestral homeland.

Thousands were murdered, and more than 1,000 Greek Cypriots have been missing since 1974.

By the same use of force, all our Turkish Cypriot compatriots were compelled by Turkey to relocate from the areas controlled by the Government of Cyprus, in which they had been residing peacefully, to the areas occupied by Turkey. In the same context, through the continuous presence of more than 40,000 Turkish troops and thousands of transplanted settlers, in a conscious effort to alter the demographic character of the island, Turkey established an illegal entity under its absolute political, economic, cultural and religious control and dominance.

It is not my intention to engage in a game of blame. On the contrary, I truly wish that I were in the position to inform the Assembly that my vision of reaching a settlement — one that I have repeatedly described from this rostrum — has become a reality. Unfortunately, despite our constructive approach, our tireless and unwavering efforts and the progress achieved, the most recent rounds of talks, which were launched in May 2015 and began to crescendo in July 2017 at Crans-Montana, have reached a deadlock, which is attributable exclusively to Turkey's intransigent position, as reflected in its proposals aimed at reducing Cyprus to a Turkish protectorate instead of being positively predisposed to establishing a truly independent, sovereign and conventional State. One might consider my previous comments to be exaggerated were I not able to substantiate them, as I intend to do now.

In 1960, with the establishment of the Republic of Cyprus, among others, under the Treaty of Guarantee, Turkey, Great Britain and Greece set out to guarantee the independence, territorial integrity and security of Cyprus. In that regard, I should stress that Turkey's exploitation of that provision has regrettably led to the pain and suffering that the people of Cyprus — Greek and Turkish Cypriots alike — have endured and continue to endure as a consequence of the unacceptable status quo. It is for that exact reason that, since resuming negotiations on establishing a normal and sovereign State and from the very beginning, we have made it our goal to terminate the Treaty of Guarantee and the right of intervention, as well as agree to a sunset clause for full withdrawal of the foreign occupation troops. That is a principled position that the Secretary-General himself holds as an indispensable element in efforts to reach a settlement. As he said on 4 June,

> "Progress in this chapter [that is, the chapter pertaining to security and guarantees] is an essential element in reaching an overall agreement and in building trust between the two communities in relation to their future security".

Based on both the observed progress in the bicommunal dialogue and the Secretary-General's assessment, which I just cited, on 28 June the multilateral Conference on Cyprus opened with great expectations. Following negotiations in an effort to positively support the whole process, the Secretary-General presented an outline of six fundamental thematic topics comprising, on the one hand, the chapter on security and guarantees, including the withdrawal of foreign troops, and, on the other hand, issues related to the internal aspects of the Cyprus problem. Reaching the points of convergence within the Secretary-General's framework would have led to a strategic agreement, thereby injecting a new dynamic and impetus into the process of realizing the valid hope that an overall settlement might be feasible.

In full compliance with the Secretary-General's outline, I submitted credible and realistic proposals that effectively addressed the sensitivities and concerns of both communities, and that, like the Secretary-General's framework, were based on the capacity of the Republic of Cyprus as a State member of the European Union (EU) and the United Nations. In stark contrast to the framework of the Secretary-General and the positions of the other two guarantor Powers, Turkey, in adopting an inflexible position, insisted on maintaining the Treaty of Guarantee and the right of intervention, as well as the permanent presence of troops.

In his statement before the General Assembly at its current session (see A/72/PV.4), the President of Turkey, Mr. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, claimed that the unsuccessful outcome of negotiations at Crans-Montana was attributable to the incomprehensible position of the Greek Cypriot side. In response, I would like to say that I am sorry but I have to reply by asking the Turkish President the following questions.

Is it incomprehensible to aspire to establish an independent and sovereign State without foreign guarantees and the intervention of a third country, while enjoying freedom from the presence of occupation troops?

Is it irrational to advocate establishing a normal State in which all decisions are made only by its citizens, free from foreign dependencies?

Is it unreasonable for an EU member State to efficiently and effectively participate in the decision-making of the European Union?

Is it unfounded to envision terminating the anachronistic Treaty of Guarantee and establishing a robust security system based on the Charter of the United Nations and the relevant treaties of the European Union and the Council of Europe?

Is it against any established principle for the United Nations, as well as the relevant institutions of the EU, to ensure and safeguard the smooth and secure implementation of the provisions of the settlement? And is it a paradox to reject Turkey's insistence that it should assume that role?

Does any constitution of a federal State provide that, for every decision at the federal level, at least one positive vote by the members of the State is required, especially when one of the members of the federation is controlled by a third party?

Finally, could anyone maintain that reaching a settlement based on Turkey's proposals would have led to establishing a functional and viable State?

Despite our disappointment, what I want to emphatically stress and convey is that the vision of the people of Cyprus is simply to end the unacceptable status quo and establish a federal State that would ensure all generations of Greek and Turkish Cypriots conditions of stability for a safe, prosperous and peaceful future; a State free from any foreign interventions and dependencies; a "normal State", as the Secretary-General has very correctly stated; a State led by Cypriots for Cypriots. In that regard, and contrary to the statements made by Turkish officials, it is my intention, at tomorrow's meeting with the Secretary-General, to convey our readiness to immediately resume negotiations in accordance with his framework and in line with the relevant United Nations resolutions.

Within this context, it is widely acknowledged that if a new conference on Cyprus is to convene, and in order to avoid a repetition of the shortcomings of the past, there should be thorough and solid preparations and strong political will and determination on the part of all interested parties and stakeholders so as to ensure that this time deliberations will lead to a positive outcome. For that, I have no doubt that the Secretary-General and the permanent members of the Security Council will offer us their support and help.

At the same time, at this critical juncture we need an alternative to unilateral actions that have a negative effect on the aim of moving the process forward. Mutually agreed confidence-building measures that are in line with the relevant Security Council resolutions and reports of the Secretary-General, such as the return and resettlement of Varosha to its rightful and lawful inhabitants, would be game-changers in creating a climate conducive to resuming negotiations with the aim of reaching a comprehensive settlement. That aim would be further reinforced through progress on the humanitarian issue of missing persons. To that end, I call on Turkey to fully cooperate in order to resolve this tragic issue. I also take this opportunity to urge all countries that may hold information to open their archives in order to support our efforts to bring an end to this tragic aspect of the Cyprus problem.

In conclusion, I once again urge Turkey and our Turkish Cypriot compatriots to realize that it is only through mutual respect and compromises, not obsolete fixations on failed practices, that we will achieve a viable and lasting settlement that has neither winners nor losers and fully respects and addresses the sensitivities and concerns of both communities. That is the only way for Cyprus to fully utilize its potential and exploit its unique geographical position. That is my vision.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Cyprus for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Nicos Anastasiades, President of the Republic of Cyprus, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Roch Marc Christian Kaboré, President of Faso and President of the Council of Ministers of Burkina Faso

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of Faso and President of the Council of Ministers of Burkina Faso.

Mr. Roch Marc Christian Kaboré, President of Faso and President of the Council of Ministers of Burkina Faso, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome

to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Roch Marc Christian Kaboré, President of Faso and President of the Council of Ministers of Burkina Faso, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Kaboré (*spoke in French*): The seventy-second session of the General Assembly is being held at a time when the world's ability to make progress faces continued significant challenges. The maintenance of international peace and security, the fight against terrorism and extremism, the eradication of poverty, and the achievement of sustainable development and a fairer and more humane international order are our main concerns today. They test us unremittingly, and we have an urgent and pressing duty to provide rapid and sustainable solutions.

My delegation and I congratulate the President of the General Assembly on his well-deserved election, and I would like to assure him of our full cooperation in his successful conduct of his work. I also thank his predecessor for his effective execution of his mandate.

I would also like to pay tribute to Secretary-General António Guterres who, during his first few months at the head of our Organization, has demonstrated his fully committment to peace and development and his resolve to pursue the ambitious goal of revitalizing the United Nations.

Two years ago we adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in order to give a new global momentum to peace, prosperity, development, justice and humanism. The entry into force of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change was welcome in that regard. The establishment of a follow-up and review mechanism for the implementation of the SDGs, as well as the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development to monitor the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, are also real achievements.

Despite those successes, obstacles remain on the path to building a world of peace and prosperity. I would therefore stress the importance of our theme this session, which restores the human individual to the heart of our global development and governance policies.

We cannot forget that every day in Africa, in my country and in others, men and women are dying because of a lack of care or food, children are not enjoying the fundamental right to education, young people are reduced to facing the rage of the seas and oceans to seek a better future, and entire populations are condemned to wander endlessly as victims of conflicts and disaster, all against the backdrop of an international context overshadowed by terrorism and extreme violence. Obviously, it is now more important than ever to change our paradigms, in our conduct of both domestic and international affairs, in order to move from rhetoric to action and a results-based approach.

The success of the round table of public and private donors to our national plan for economic and social development, following the appeal that I made at this forum on 22 September 2016 (see A/71/PV.15), speaks to our partners' confidence in my country. I would like to take this opportunity to offer them our deep gratitude. Burkina Faso is engaged in a process of economic recovery through major structural reforms, and one of the objectives is to attract, facilitate and secure investments.

With a view to strengthening our participatory democracy by putting citizens in charge of the functioning of the State, Burkina Faso joined the Partnership for an Open Government in 2016. In that context, we are drawing up our first national action plan to strengthen the fight against corruption and improve our quality of governance, in a spirit of cooperation with non-State actors, civil-society organizations and the media. At the same time, an array of reforms aimed at strengthening our democracy and optimizing our institutions is moving ahead smoothly. A preliminary draft constitution has been prepared by representatives of every sector of society, and the judiciary is working independently to resolve the political and economic disputes and crimes that have plagued our national reconciliation efforts for decades.

Targeted for some time by terrorist and obscurantist forces, my country is fully aware of their clearly stated intention to destabilize it and all the countries of the region. The fight against terrorism is therefore a national priority, and will succeed if it is part not only of a subregional approach but also in a context of economic development in the most vulnerable areas.

We are therefore paying particular attention to the north of our country. While there have been some operational successes there, we must bolster them through the emergency investment programme that we recently adopted as a way to reduce the vulnerability of populations, especially young people and women. However — and we cannot reiterate this

enough — terrorism is above all a global scourge. Given that it strikes without discrimination, it calls for a clear and firm condemnation from all of us and an effective collective response based on solidarity and shared efforts and means. That is the raison d'être of the Group of Five for the Sahel (G-5 Sahel), whose operationalization we are working to accelerate, as the inauguration on 10 September in Sévaré, Mali, of the G-5 Sahel Force Command Centre demonstrated.

I also welcomed the Security Council's adoption of resolution 2359 (2017) on 21 June. However, given the gravity of the situation in the area, we must seize the opportunity offered by the consideration of the Secretary-General's forthcoming follow-up report to strengthen the mandate of the Multinational Joint Task Force by providing it with the means necessary to achieve its mission. Similarly, we welcome the establishment of the Sahel Alliance, whose first high-level meeting is scheduled for October.

One of the major challenges in that regard remains the mobilization of resources, as we stressed at the high-level meeting held on 18 September here in New York, under the auspices of the Secretary-General, on the situation in the Sahel. We hope that the international planning conference provided for in resolution 2359 (2017), to be held in Brussels in December, will fulfil all its promises.

The quest for peace must remain at the heart of our common action, especially that of our Organization. In Africa, many hotbeds of tension persist. While we welcome the recent political developments in Mali, it should be noted that the security situation in the north of that country remains highly precarious. I hope that the establishment of a sanctions regime by the Security Council on 5 September, at the request of the Government of Mali, will be an effective additional lever for the implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. We invite all the forces present in Mali — including the National Armed Forces, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali, Operation Barkhane and the G-5 Sahel force — to work in good faith and in full coordination in order to expedite the definitive return of peace and security to the region.

Mr. Rabary-Njaka (Madagascar), Vice-President, took the Chair.

We must remain mobilized to bring to a successful conclusion the processes of conflict resolution or exit from the crises in Libya, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic, Somalia, South Sudan and Burundi. We call on the various protagonists to promote dialogue and reconciliation, and to recognize that they will be the primary owners and architects of peace in their countries. Concerning the question of Western Sahara, Burkina Faso reiterates its call for dialogue and negotiation, in a spirit of compromise, with a view to achieving a political and realistic settlement of the dispute.

The Palestinian issue continues to be a major concern. I welcomed the holding in January of the Paris Conference, which reaffirmed a solution whereby two States, Israel and Palestine, should live side by side in peace and within secure and internationally recognized borders. The commitment of both parties is the only way to end the conflict and achieve a peaceful and definitive settlement.

The efforts of the international community in Iraq, Syria and Yemen must be intensified if we do not wish to see that part of the world sink into perpetual chaos. Burkina Faso is also concerned about the situation in the Gulf Cooperation Council. It urges the protagonists to give priority to dialogue and negotiation in order to end to that crisis.

Burkina Faso condemns North Korea's nuclear tests, which pose a threat to the peace and security of the Korean peninsula and the world. We urge that country to respect the resolutions of the Security Council, and hope that the logic of dialogue and negotiation will prevail over that of escalation and confrontation.

In that context, I reaffirm my country's commitment to general and complete disarmament and its support for the efforts of the United Nations to that end, in relation both to weapons of mass destruction and conventional weapons. In that regard, I urge all countries, especially those whose ratification is required, to prioritize the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty as soon as possible. The adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons on 7 July should give further impetus to that effort.

The proliferation of small arms and light weapons poses one of the main threats to international peace and security. My country, which actively participated in the development of the Arms Trade Treaty, is convinced that its implementation will help to eradicate that scourge, which is a genuine obstacle to the development of our States.

Multilateralism is the tool par excellence of dialogue and solidarity among peoples. In that regard, the international community would certainly benefit from the Republic of China on Taiwan's effective and broader participation in the specialized agencies and mechanisms of the United Nations system. In the name of that same dialogue and solidarity, which characterize peaceful relations among the actors on the international stage, Burkina Faso is in favour of the total lifting of the embargo on Cuba so that Havana and Washington, D.C., can maintain mutually beneficial partnership relations.

United Nations reform remains a central issue for the world's governing body. We must approach it with the courage and serenity that seeing justice done for Africa requires, particularly with regard to its representation on the Security Council. That accords with the African Common Position and our Organization's necessary adaptation to a changing world. At a time of such uncertainty and upheaval, we must shoulder our responsibility to give our citizens reason to believe that a better future lies ahead and that we can bequeath a safer world to the next generation.

The United Nations is the best instrument we have for that. Let us all commit here and now to making the United Nations stronger, more modern and more efficient. In that regard, we know that we can count on the Secretary-General's commitment and determination. I firmly believe that he will play his part in implementing bold reforms so that the United Nations can be a genuine Organization of the people.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of Faso and President of the Council of Ministers of Burkina Faso for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Roch Marc Christian Kaboré, President of Faso and President of the Council of Ministers of Burkina Faso, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, President of the Republic of Ghana

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Ghana.

Mr. Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, President of the Republic of Ghana, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, President of the Republic of Ghana, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Akufo-Addo: It has been 60 years since my country, Ghana, became a Member of the Organization. We joined when we became independent, some 12 years after the first meeting of the Organization in San Francisco, and Ghana has been an active participant in the United Nations ever since.

I want to thank the United Nations for the honour done Ghana by my appointment by the Secretary-General as co-Chair of the advocacy group of eminent persons for the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), to continue in the position that was held by my predecessor as President, His Excellency Mr. John Dramani Mahama. That mark of trust in Ghana's leaders is a matter of justifiable pride for the Ghanian people, a trust I pledge to uphold.

On 25 September 2015, when the SDGs were adopted, there were sceptics who feared that the Goals were too many and too complex to be successfully tackled, even with concerted effort. The lesson that we have learned from the experience of the Organization, however, is that once the world puts its collective mind to something, the chances are that we will get it right. Every day, something happens to bring home to us, the inhabitants of the planet, that we are in it together.

There is no better or more dramatic indication of that truth than the images that have recently dominated our television screens of devastation caused by floods in Houston, Texas; Dhaka, Bangladesh; Mumbai, India; Palpa, Nepal; Dominica, Puerto Rico, Antigua and Barbuda and Saint Martin, all in the Caribbean, and Niamey, in the Niger. One of the most modern cities in the richest, most powerful nation on our Earth suffered the same fate as did Niamey in the Sahel region of Africa, one of the poorest parts of the world. At the height of the raging storms, one thing became clear. It did not matter if you were in the richest or poorest part of the world, the awesome power of nature was on display and we humans came across as the same sad creatures at the mercy of nature.

As I watched and listened along with the rest of the world, it occurred to me that taken altogether, the SDGs are indeed a worthy set of Goals for the world. They bear repeating — no poverty, zero hunger, good health and well-being, quality education, clean water and sanitation, decent work and economic growth, industry, innovation and infrastructure, reduced inequality, sustainable cities and communities, responsible consumption and production, life below water, life on land, peace, justice and strong institutions, to be achieved through partnerships for the Goals. We should work hard to achieve the Goals; the world will be a much better place.

Ghana was the first country in sub-Saharan Africa to gain its freedom from colonial rule. This year marks the sixtieth anniversary of its independence, and it is auspicious that I am addressing the Assembly for the first time on the birthday of our historic first President Kwame Nkrumah — the day we have set aside to commemorate him.

We believe that it is time Africa came of age and held its rightful place on the world stage. Africa will be neither a pawn nor a victim. This Africa will be honest with itself and with the world. It will shed its cloak of poverty and become prosperous. We are under no illusions about the hard work it will take to achieve our stated goals, but we are not afraid of hard work. We know that the critical ingredient in making sustainable economic progress is to ensure a stable, democratic system of Government.

I believe that we are making that progress in Ghana. After years of political turmoil and accompanying economic chaos, a consensus has emerged in our Fourth Republic. We have had political stability for the past 25 years and a multiparty democracy in which regular elections are now an accepted feature of our governance. I am here today because of elections last December, in which the people of Ghana voted out an incumbent Government and gave me and my party the mandate and honour to govern our nation for the next four years. We continue to be a beacon of democracy and stability on the continent. Our institutions of State are growing stronger and we have made more progress with our economy than at any time since independence.

We are nowhere near where we want to be, but we are determined to realize our potential and make Ghana a prosperous nation. There will always be the adventurous among us Ghanaians who would want to seek challenges in different parts of the world. We wish them well, and expect that wherever they go they will be welcomed and treated with dignity. But we are working to grow our economy and open up opportunities for all our citizens. No longer should Ghanaians feel that they have to subject themselves to the intolerable and inhumane conditions of crossing the Sahara and drowning in the Mediterranean in hopes of making a living in Europe.

We have just started the free senior high school programme that aims to guarantee secondary education for all of Ghana's children. It will ensure that all our children will be educated at least to the secondary level, and that money, or the lack of it, will no longer mean being denied an education. That has already led to an increase of more than 90,000 children entering secondary school in the current academic year who would otherwise have dropped out at by now. Sustainable Development Goal 4, which aims to ensure inclusive, equitable, quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all, will be within our reach by the target date. We do not want to be a scar on anybody's conscience. We want to build an economy that is not dependent on charity and handouts. Long and bitter experience has taught us that no matter how generous the charity, we would remain poor.

We want to build a Ghana that looks to the use of its own resources and their proper management as the way to engineer social and economic growth in the country. We want to build an economy that looks past commodities in order to position our country in the global marketplace. We are not rejecting aid, but we do want to discard a mindset of dependency and living on handouts. We want to build a Ghana beyond aid. It is an easier platform on which to build sustainable relationships.

In talking about sustainable relations, Africa and, indeed, Ghana are committed to ensuring that we remain a continent free of nuclear weapons. Three weeks ago, highly enriched uranium was flown out of Ghana back to China, signalling the end of the removal of all such material from the country. Our nuclear reactor has since been converted to using low-enriched fuel for power generation. A world free of nuclear weapons is in our collective interest.

I wish to reaffirm my country's commitment to maintaining friendly and cordial relations with all the countries and peoples of the world. Ghana's full

engagement, through the Economic Community of West African States, in the process of West African integration, and through the African Union, in the process of African integration, remains a goal of my Government. Regional and continental integration are in Ghana's interest, as they represent one of the surest ways of establishing the conditions for prosperity on the continent in the decades ahead. They will also help to ensure security and combat the scourges of terrorism, extremism and intolerance.

The conflicts that continue to plague our continent in Libya, South Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Mali would be more effectively resolved if the international community were to support and not undermine the efforts of our regional and continental organizations to deal with them. Ghana will also continue to be active in the multilateral organizations to which we belong, such as La Francophonie, the Commonwealth of Nations and the United Nations, because we believe multilateral action and international cooperation are in our common interest.

We want to build a Ghana that will enable our people to deal with the rest of the world on an equal playing field. I am saying nothing new when I draw attention to the urgent need to reform the Organization. While it has been talked about and scheduled for a long time, we have somehow never found the courage or the will to reform the United Nations. Ghana supports the process of United Nations reform, especially of the Security Council, as set out in the African Common Position on United Nations reform, based on the Ezulwini Consensus. The time is long overdue to correct the long-standing injustice that the current structure and composition of the Security Council represents for the nations of Africa.

We cannot continue to preach democracy and fairness and insist on peace and justice around the world when our global Organization is not seen by the majority of its Member States as having a structure that is just and fair. Indeed, many see it as helping to perpetuate an unfair world order. The Organization provides the best vehicle for the world to manage its many and varied problems, and we would undermine its credibility and fail in our duty if we did not reform the United Nations. Let us not dare to let ourselves and future generations down. The time for reform has come.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Ghana for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, President of the Republic of Ghana, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Ali Bongo Ondimba, President of the Gabonese Republic

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Gabonese Republic.

Mr. Ali Bongo Ondimba, President of the Gabonese Republic, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Ali Bongo Ondimba, President of the Gabonese Republic, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Bongo Ondimba (*spoke in French*): At the outset, let me congratulate Mr. Miroslav Lajčák on his outstanding election as President of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session. I wish to assure him of Gabon's support in his fulfilment of the mandate entrusted to him. I also commend the valuable work of his predecessor, Ambassador Peter Thomson.

It is a privilege for me to convey my warm congratulations to the new Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres. I believe firmly that his rich and long experience is a valuable asset to our Organization, and I welcome his special emphasis on conflict prevention in his inaugural speech.

The theme of the general debate of this session, "Focusing on people: Striving for peace and a decent life for all on a sustainable planet", lies at the very heart of our priorities. It reminds us all of the place that the human individual must occupy in our respective actions and of our obligation to reconcile development and durable peace with the preservation of the environment for present and future generations. It is up to us all to act to fashion a human species for whom a decent life for all will be self-evident.

Along with security, peace is an essential prerequisite for the development of Africa, including my country of Gabon. In that connection, Africa continues to occupy the lion's share of the Security

Council's agenda, and my country therefore endorses the African position in favour of a permanent seat for Africa on the Council.

Inasmuch as peace is essential at the international level, peace and security at the national level are the basic ingredients for development and for the participation of all in the democratic debate. Gabon is a country that bears the stamp of peace, and we want to remain the haven of fraternity and solidarity that we have always been. That is why, at the beginning of the year, I convened a political dialogue to which I invited all of the nation's most prominent persons. Everyone who participated in the dialogue was able to candidly discuss all of our country's important issues and desired reforms. We reached compromises that were difficult but also dynamic and necessary — on the voting system, electoral procedures and the organization of powers. Moreover, the implementation of the conclusions of the political dialogue has already begun, with the recent formation of a new Government that includes representatives from the opposition and civil society.

With the adoption first of the Millennium Development Goals and, subsequently, of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Organization is continuing its efforts to mobilize the international community in order to offer humankind a decent life on a preserved planet. Beyond such declarations, however, if we are to achieve the SDGs, the time has come to give the Organization the resources it needs to carry out its work through predictable and sustained financing.

As for Gabon, the new Government is operating under a framework entitled "Emerging Gabon 2025: a vision, a strategy, a road map", aimed at achieving sustainable development and diversifying the national economy. That approach, which seeks to reduce the country's dependence on extractive industries and dampen the volatility of raw-material prices, is already taking shape through an industrial base that is creating jobs and wealth, the Nkok special economic zone.

Gabon has not been spared from the crisis that has affected our entire planet and that has been reflected in an economic slowdown that has had a negative impact on employment, particularly for young people. In response, we have adopted an economic recovery programme aimed at providing new economic momentum through measures that adjust the budget, develop infrastructure and encourage the private sector to leverage our economy's diversification and transformation.

Nevertheless, my Government is striving to offer the people of Gabon better living conditions through a number of measures, ranging from reducing the prices of food staples to building new hospitals. I have also initiated an equal-opportunity programme that will enable all Gabonese people to enjoy the same resources as they embark on a path of personal and collective fulfilment. To that end, I have placed women's empowerment at the heart of the Government's agenda.

The future of our planet will depend on our determination to honour the commitments that we undertook in the Paris Agreement during the twenty-first Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. We do not have the right to disappoint our peoples at this historic moment, because the challenges posed by global warming are not simply environmental in nature — they are also political, economic and security challenges. We have even less right to disappoint our peoples, given that the reality that we may wish to ignore calls attention to itself every day with increasingly brutal force, in the form of all the recent environmental disasters. I would like to take this opportunity to express the condolences and moral support of the people of Gabon to the countries that have been victims of the recent hurricanes and cyclones, as well as the victims of the earthquake in Mexico.

Gabon will not deviate from its path. Our public policies will continue to be aimed at managing our resources responsibly and sustainably. In that spirit, my country has just created 20 marine protected areas in addition to our existing 13 national parks on land. I have also instructed the Government to strengthen its reforestation policy so as to ensure the sustainability of our forests. With regard to my country's ongoing commitment to those key issues, I have agreed to lead the Committee of African Heads of State and Government on Climate Change for the next two years, following the term of my Egyptian brother President Al Sisi. I will be responsible for bringing Africa's voice to all climate-change negotiations.

At the subregional level, my peers have also appointed me Secretary-General of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS). My task will be to spearhead an institutional reform process in that important regional integration body. We are even more determined to ensure economic integration in our subregion because we believe that joint development is needed in order to deal with the fluctuations in the

international market. Through its Office in Libreville, ECCAS supports Central Africa in its efforts to deal with the peace and security challenges in the region. In that regard, member countries have confirmed their firm determination to fight the beast of terrorism in all its forms regardless of its motivation.

To that end, the subregional counter-terrorism strategy for Central Africa, which was recently endorsed in Yaoundé and is in line with the African Union counter-terrorism strategy, translates our commitment to eradicating that scourge through concrete steps. I take this opportunity to commend the upcoming holding of a joint summit of ECCAS and the Economic Community of West African States on counter-terrorism, which I have always hoped to see happen and which was encouraged by Security Council resolution 2349 (2017). I also commend the initiative taken by the countries of the Group of Five for the Sahel to establish a subregional force to effectively combat terrorism and all other threats to peace and security.

Combating terrorism is a multifaceted and long-term struggle that requires cooperation among States and solidarity with the victims of such barbarism. The response cannot be exclusively military. I therefore call for the implementation of the relevant provisions of resolution 2199 (2015) in order to reduce the sources of financing for these criminal networks.

In addition to terrorism, another serious threat to many countries, including mine, is poaching. In that regard, my country has sponsored an important resolution aimed at pooling our efforts to contain the problem, which decimates our flora and fauna and encourages instability in a number of regions, particularly in Africa. Speedy implementation of the recommendations put forward in the resolution is essential and should guide us in seeking the proper balance between the protection of nature and the survival of local populations, who are actually the main victims of poaching.

Among the worrying current situations in Africa, that in the Central African Republic requires our sustained attention. Gabon continues to have a presence in that brother country as part of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic. I call on our various partners to support the action plan developed by ECCAS and the Central African Economic and Monetary Community, as well as the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme.

Similarly, the arms embargo must be lifted for the legal and legitimate Government of the Central African Republic exclusively, so that it can restore security and its authority throughout the national territory. The resilience and defiance of the negative forces that are ravaging the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic and other parts of the Central African subregion derive their strength from the illegal exploitation of underground natural resources and wildlife. International measures designed to combat the illegal trade in such resources must be properly enforced if we wish to defeat the armed groups that continue to carry out such criminal activities.

Working to foster peace also requires eliminating weapons of mass destruction by implementing the relevant international instruments. Some parts of the Middle East have been the focus of the serious threats to international peace and security caused by the nebulous terrorist organization known as the Islamic State, which is exacerbating instability in Syria and Iraq.

In that connection, we must address the question of Palestine, which remains a thorn in the side of the international community. In my view, the resumption of direct talks between the two sides remains the only way to reach a solution. I commend the efforts by the United States and France to push for a resumption of the peace process.

Similarly, we have noted the recent events on the Korean peninsula and remain firmly committed to peace and stability in that part of the world. We call for strict compliance with the relevant Security Council resolutions in that regard.

Another major human tragedy unfolding before our eyes is the situation of the Rohingya in Myanmar. In the twenty-first century it is simply unacceptable that men, women and children are being killed or forced to flee their country for the mere fact that they belong to a particular religious community. The Assembly's universal conscience cannot and must not accept that.

Finally, and in connection with international solidarity and justice, lifting the embargo that has plagued Cuba for several decades is only fair.

Our Organization is blowing out its seventy-second candle. Its universal vocation has been firmly established. I am confident that, with our collective

determination, it will be able to overcome the current multifaceted challenges to peace and security in the world. That is why prioritizing human beings by ensuring peace and a decent life for all on a protected planet is no longer a simple ambition but a collective duty.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Gabonese Republic for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Ali Bongo Ondimba, President of the Gabonese Republic, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

Address by Mr. Abdrabuh Mansour Hadi Mansour, President of the Republic of Yemen

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The Assembly will now hear an address by the President of the Republic of Yemen.

Mr. Abdrabuh Mansour Hadi Mansour, President of the Republic of Yemen, was escorted into the General Assembly Hall.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I have the honour to welcome to the United Nations His Excellency Mr. Abdrabuh Mansour Hadi Mansour, President of the Republic of Yemen, and to invite him to address the Assembly.

President Mansour (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the Government and the people of Yemen, I sincerely congratulate the President and his friendly nation, Slovakia, on assuming the presidency of the General Assembly at its seventy-second session, and wish him every success in his endeavours. I would also like to express my great appreciation for the significant efforts of his predecessor, Mr. Peter Thomson, in guiding the work of the previous session.

I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his exceptional efforts in implementing the Organization's noble mission of maintaining international peace and security, and in employing all its good offices with a view to achieving sustainable peace in my country, Yemen. We are also grateful to his Special Envoy for Yemen, Mr. Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed.

This debate is being held as we in the Republic of Yemen are ending our third year of the war imposed on our people by the Houthi/Saleh coalition, following its rebellion against the consensus solutions adopted under the Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative and its Implementation Mechanism and the outcomes of the national dialogue, as well as the political process carried out fully under the auspices of the United Nations. The political process culminated in a visit to Sana'a by the former Secretary-General, where he held a special meeting with the Security Council in Yemen. The evil Houthi/Saleh coalition has rebelled against the national consensus, which was based on the outcomes of the national dialogue and included all the Yemeni political parties and social factions. It has used violence and terrorism to rebel against the legitimately elected leadership and armed force against our people. It has destroyed the cities of Yemen and taken the entire country hostage.

After exhausting every possible peaceful political means to turn this evil coalition away from the path of violence and terrorism that it has chosen, the Yemeni people, in all their various factions, have united and resisted the rebels' de facto policy of facilitating Iranian expansionism in our region. To that end, we have requested support, on behalf of the people of Yemen, from our brothers in the Arab coalition under the leadership of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. They have responded to our request and granted us support.

The theme of the seventy-second session of the General Assembly represents what we have been seeking in Yemen. Through negotiations in Geneva, Vienna and Kuwait, our legitimate leadership has sought a sustainable, fair and lasting peace that will not falter and that lays the foundation for a real State that ensures peace and security for all its citizens and prevents violence. We seek a peace that grants the State alone a monopoly on the use of force and prevents armed militias from forming and operating in the country. It must be a peace that is based on consensual documents that people have agreed on and that have received international and regional support.

Here, I would like to clarify a commonly heard claim that our problem in Yemen is one of political differences that cannot be managed merely by sitting around negotiation tables, despite our efforts and compromises in that regard. But what we are facing is not even a coup d'état as it is commonly understood. It transcends that and is based on a difference in philosophies, ideologies and values. We are dealing with extremist religious sects that believe that God has granted them an ethnic superiority and the right to rule, to forge alliances with forces that seek retaliation

and that go against all human values. In this way, the coup of the Houthis, who are racist, backward and patrilineal, has gone beyond any traditional military coups d'état, which still preserve the State and its institutions. These militias are destroying all State institutions. The army and security forces have been replaced by popular committees and militias that serve one faction only, based on ethnicity. That also affects economic institutions.

Our resources are utterly depleted, and we have not even been able to pay salaries for almost a year. The private sector has disappeared, replaced by a new class of merchants who function at the expense of our national interests. Even our school curricula have been replaced with extremist curricula that have provoked sectarian strife. On top of all that, the opposition militias receive full support, politically and militarily, in kind, in the form of weapons and financing from Iran, a State that is determined to destabilize our region. Sustained peace can therefore only be possible if Iran ceases to interfere in our affairs, which it has been doing by creating tensions, inventing conflicts and stoking feelings of hatred and violence. We must control Iran's expansionist aspirations in the region.

Member States may remember that when I stood before the Assembly five years ago, I spoke of the measures that we would take on the path of peaceful political transition in Yemen in the context of the Gulf Cooperation Council Initiative and the National Dialogue Conference outcomes (see A/67/PV.9), and I informed them that Iran had been taking various measures against us. We have seized shipments carrying arms, and the Iranian Revolutionary Guards have been supporting the militias in our country and supplying them with long-range missiles. They remain a threat to our country and the entire world.

I am trying to give Member States an image of the events from the inside. The world needs to understand that the rebels are refusing all calls for peace — from Kuwait to Geneva — including the latest initiative about the port of Al Hudaydah. We announced that we were ready to accept the initiative on the Hudaydah seaport, but the other side has unilaterally rejected it. They even attempted to assassinate an international envoy. They have continued to threaten international peace and security and international maritime sea lanes. They have also threatened our brothers in the United Arab Emirates, attacking them with rockets.

From this rostrum, I emphasize our continued willingness to stop the war and build peace. We are not warmongers. We desire peace. And I have personally extended my hand, and will continue to do so, to reach a sustainable peace, because we feel the weight of our responsibility for all citizens of the Yemeni State. I affirm that we continue to desire peace based on the consensus agreements and everything that the international community has endorsed, including the implementation of Security Council resolution 2216 (2015).

I must not forget here to thank our brothers in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, who have led the efforts to mitigate our humanitarian crisis through the support that their country continues to provide through the King Salman Centre for Humanitarian Aid and Relief, and to thank all of the humanitarian organizations of the Arab coalition, donor countries and the United Nations agencies, as well as all the international efforts to combat the cholera outbreak. We stress that we are still in need of support and assistance, given our high levels of poverty, insecurity and food insecurity. We are still under blockade and at war. The city of Taiz has been under siege for three years.

The situation is dire in all of the governorates under rebel control. Salaries are no longer being paid. The State's resources, including customs incomes, have been looted. We therefore call on the United Nations and the international community to shoulder their responsibilities in Yemen by applying pressure on the rebels to implement the relevant Security Council resolutions and offer real compromises, so that we can avoid more bloodshed and destruction and so that humanitarian assistance can reach the people who need it.

From this rostrum I announce that we in the Yemeni Government are ready to provide all of the facilitation needed so that humanitarian assistance can have access everywhere in Yemen, from Sana'a to Al-Mahra, as well as in the areas under Houthi control. We are responsible before God first and before our people and the world as well. We are responsible for all our Yemeni people, regardless of their loyalties. We want to preserve the life of every Yemeni, including those who fire bullets at us and target the Yemeni people. As a legitimately elected leader, it is my job to save the Yemeni people from further bloodshed. It is forbidden for a Yemeni to kill another — absolutely forbidden.

The Yemeni Government continues to face the economic and security challenges that stem from the destruction of all aspects of Yemeni life. Today, the Yemeni Government needs extensive support for its efforts to consolidate peace and stability, provide services in the liberated areas, control the economic situation and implement counter-terrorism measures.

We call on friendly donor countries and international organizations to provide urgent support to Yemen and uphold the pledges made at the conference held in Geneva in April in support of the humanitarian response plan for Yemen. One year has passed, and only 50 per cent of the pledged funding has been provided. We also want to reactivate the dormant Group of Friends of Yemen. We must save Yemen from the crisis and move from humanitarian relief to reconstruction and economic recovery.

The Republic of Yemen sincerely and effectively supports counter-terrorism efforts, particularly because my country has long suffered from terrorism. We reject all forms of terrorism and continue to embrace our tolerant Islamic values, which reject violence and extremism, while calling for tolerance and brotherly relations. We reach out to the international community to coordinate efforts in the areas of security, culture and information and technology, so that we can defeat terrorism together.

Israel's occupation of the Palestinian territories and its settlement policies still represent one of the greatest causes of stress in our region. The people of our region therefore look to the Assembly to find a fair and lasting solution so that the Palestinian people can establish their own State, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and end the occupation and settlement, as well as the suffering of the Palestinian people.

The Republic of Yemen denounces the plight of the Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar. That genocide must cease. Terrorism in the State must stop, and we call on the international community to uphold its responsibilities and prevent such monstrous events, which we thought our modern world had permanently eliminated.

Together with our patient people and all the honourable citizens of the world, we will spare no effort to rid the Yemeni people of the atrocities committed by the rebels. We will, with God's help, fulfil the aspirations of our people to build a federal civil State that upholds justice and equality and good governance. We will rebuild a new Yemen that embraces all of its children — a Yemen that is a source of stability and security for itself, its neighbours and the world.

I should not conclude without expressing my sincere congratulations to all Yemeni people and freedom-loving nations on the occasion of the fifty-fifth anniversary of our revolution, on 26 September, which we will commemorate in the next few days. That revolution uprooted one of the most despotic regimes in histor, that of Imam Ahmed in northern Yemen, whom liberators toppled to found our Republic in 1963.

We are reminded of that racist regime by the Houthis and their allies. Over the past three years, they have tried to impose a similarly racist regime once again, in an even more violent and terroristic manner. During the time that our capital of Sana'a has been under Houthi control, thousands have been killed, injured or detained. The media have been outlawed and journalists arrested, along with countless other retaliatory measures. We must control that racist group. I salute our people on the occasion of the revolution's anniversary.

In conclusion, I wish the General Assembly every success at its seventy-second session and hope that it can achieve more development and effectiveness in its work. And I wish all Member States and human society prosperity, peace and stability.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the General Assembly, I wish to thank the President of the Republic of Yemen for the statement he has just made.

Mr. Abdrabuh Mansour Hadi Mansour, President of the Republic of Yemen, was escorted from the General Assembly Hall.

The meeting rose at 12.10 p.m.